

REMARKS

Claims 27-29 inclusive are all the claims pending in the application.

In the Final Rejection Claims 20 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Kessler. Claims 22-26 inclusive were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Marchisio et al in view of Kessler.

Claims 20-26 inclusive have been cancelled without prejudice in order to advance the prosecution of the present application and new Claims 27-29 have been substituted therefore. Reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

New independent Claim 27 is directed to a thermoformed wheel arch panel for a motor vehicle comprising at least one layer of foamed thermoplastic material having at least one reinforcing rib protruding from at least one phase of said panel wherein the foamed material in the region corresponding to the reinforcing rib has a lower density than the density of the material in the regions free from the rib. Claim 27 is also specific to the fact that the inner surface of the panel which in use is intended to face toward the wheel of the motor vehicle is free from concavities in the region corresponding to the reinforcing rib on the other face of the panel. Dependent Claims 28 and 29, which are dependent from Claim 27, are specific to the provision of a layer of cladding coupled to an outer face and an inner face, respectively, of the wheel arch panel.

While the Marchisio et al. reference is directed to a wheel arch cover panel for a motor vehicle it has a structure completely different from the Claim structure of the wheel arch panel

according to the present invention. Marchisio discloses a layered structure comprising a layer 3 of thermoformable thermoplastic material which is necessary to confer the necessary rigidity and structural strength. The layered structure of Marchisio further includes a sheet 4 of fabric applied to the face of the layer 3 facing toward the wheel of the motor vehicle and a layer 5 of expanded plastics material applied to the face of the plastics structural layer facing toward the body work of the vehicle. There is absolutely no disclosure in Marchisio of a wheel arch panel having protruding ribs for conferring structure strength since the structural strength is achieved in Marchisio by means of the structural layer 3. Furthermore, Marchisio only discloses the provision of a fabric layer on the inner surface of the wheel arch structure. There is no teaching or disclosure of the application of a fabric layer to the outer surface of the wheel arch panel.

Although, the patent to Kessler et al. discloses a citing panel for use on the exterior surface of buildings wherein the panel is formed of structural foamed plastic material having integral reinforcing ribs on an internal surface there is absolutely no disclosure or suggestion in Kessler et al. that the panel could even be used in a curved application much less for use as a wheel arch panel.

In view of the fact that Marchisio fails to disclose a thermoformed wheel arch panel comprised of at least one layer of foamed thermoformable plastics material having reinforcing ribs extending outwardly of the panel, and in view of the fact that there is absolutely no teaching or suggestion in Kessler et al. of using the panel as a wheel arch panel with the ribs protruding outwardly away from the wheel, there is absolutely no teaching or suggestion which would lead one skilled in the art to combine the two references as proposed by the Examiner in the last

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Office Action. Such a combination of references could only be arrived at in retrospect once having viewed the disclosure of the present application. Therefore, it is submitted that new Claims 27-29 inclusive would not be obvious to one skilled in the art in view of the teachings of Marchisio and Kessler. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that Claims 27-29 inclusive be allowed and the application passed to issue forthwith.

If for any reason the Examiner is unable to allow the application on the next Office Action and feels that an interview would be helpful to resolve any remaining issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney for the purpose of arranging such an interview.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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